

Braueria 31

Lunz, August 2004

Dear Trichopterologist,

On 24 October 2003 our friend and colleague Michael Ian Crichton celebrated his 90th birthday. At this occasion I want to thank him for his kind help which he had offered to me in many ways over 30 years. From the first Trichoptera Symposium in Lunz in 1974 onwards he has corrected all English texts by non-native speakers in *Braueria*, then *Trichoptera Newsletter*. In the same time he has corrected many of my own manuscripts, and I know that he did the same for a number of colleagues. My initiative to invite the trichopterists of the world to a meeting in 1974 was a full success and developed well over the years, but this was mainly the result of Ian Crichton's willingness to continue this tradition by organising a second meeting in Reading in 1977. Now he has reduced his activity, but he tells me that he is in good health, and he has his granddaughter with him. May he enjoy more healthy years in his home and his beloved garden!

There are now more Newsletters on caddis except *Braueria* (although the others are electronic and not real letters): *Trichopteron* and *Nectopsyche* (see page 28). In the latter I found an interesting and useful article by Roger Blahnik und Ralph Holzenthal on collection and curation of caddisflies which causes me to write a comment. The authors are strongly in favour of pinned and dry collected adult caddisflies, in contrast to the usual method to collect them in alcohol. It is true that colours and wing patterns disappear with time in liquid collections. I have seen specimens in alcohol collected in 1859 which were light yellow but otherwise in perfect condition. I remember that I had not understood the specific name of *Neureclipsis bimaculata* until I had seen living specimens with two striking spots on the forewing; in alcohol preserved ones these spots are invisible. It is similar with *Tinodes dives*, although these metallic spots will also disappear in pinned dry specimens. But the main point why to preserve caddis in alcohol is something else. Liquid preservation is not old tradition but a relatively recent invention. As far as I can see, Walter Döhler was convinced of it and recommended it to the colleagues. All the old traditional collections of McLachlan, Brauer, Hagen, Kolenati, Pictet, Ris, Martynov etc. are predominantly or exclusively pinned. The main reason was that reasonably tight glass tubes did not exist or were extremely expensive before, let us say, 1950. Caddisflies are extremely delicate and fragile insects, and even in well-curated collections it is hard to find a specimen with the complete set of two antennae and six legs. A collection of pinned, dry specimens needs to be permanently and carefully curated. Five years without care, after the death of the owner or with a lazy curator, and its fate will be the same as the well-known Navás, Turati or Klapálek collections, not to mention some museums in developing countries. Alcohol collections are by far more resistant.

But the main point – at last for me – is that the work with dry preserved material is extremely time-consuming, and I cannot see how I could do so much taxonomic work as I did with caddis in reasonable time without assistants and working alone. Pinning 500 small specimens in the next morning after a good night catch takes a minimum of three hours which time is lost for collecting (if a table and good light for pinning is available, which is rarely the case under field conditions). And by far more time is lost when pinned specimens must be identified. Details of the copulatory structures are often not visible in dry specimens. Specimens in alcohol are soft and their details may be made visible with dissecting needles without damage, but dry specimens must usually be macerated. The procedure to remove the abdomen from a small dry specimen takes much more time, and very often results in breaking off and loss of other parts. So, in practice, only one or two specimens from a series will be macerated, and the others are put together without examination. I remember a pinned type series from the Schmid collection in which I found four species including a new one, but Fernand Schmid was certainly one of the most careful workers. See also the story of *Allogamus stadleri* in my paper in this number. Of course I have also a small pinned collection (including the wonderful *Nectopsyche* species which I hesitated to drop into alcohol), but, for this good reason, and not for tradition, the bulk of my collection is in alcohol.

Yours sincerely,

